

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

10-76

Orleans

EAS.1335

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town/City: EASTHAM

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):

Photograph



Address: 20 Weir Road

Historic Name: Harold and Ruth Johnson House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: 1951

Source: Eastham Tax Commitment Books

Style/Form: No Style

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Concrete block

Wall/Trim: Wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
None

Major Alterations (*with dates*):
Additions (dates unknown)

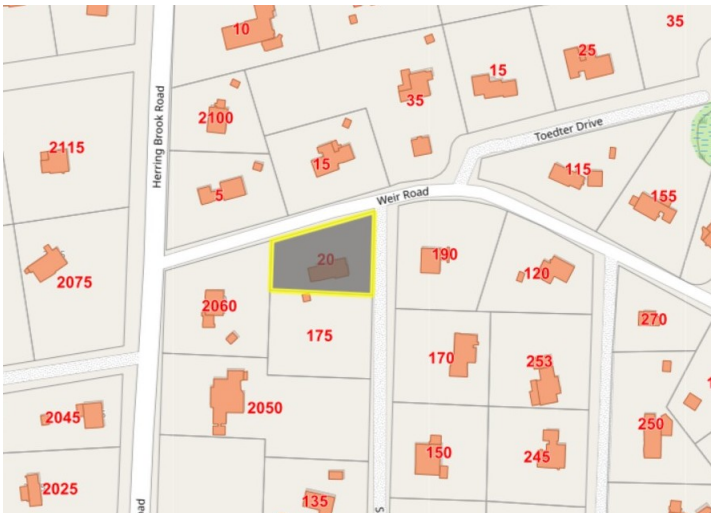
Condition: Good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.33 acres

Setting: This property is located on the south side of Weir Road in an area of subdivisions with modest houses from the early-20th century on. This house is set back on its parcel. The property in front of the house is landscaped with lawn, mature trees, and foundation plantings.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant, for

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): April 2025

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

EASTHAM

20 WEIR ROAD

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The oldest portion of this house is the middle, one-story, side-gable block. This block is three bays wide with a centered entrance. The screen porch to the right may be original or a later addition, and the left wing was a more recent addition. The oldest portion of the house appears to rest on a concrete block foundation. The elevations are clad in wood shingles with plain cornerboards. The roofs are clad in asphalt shingles. Exterior brick chimneys rise from within the porch on the right side, and on the left side of the later addition. Fenestration now includes modern, thermal 6/6 and smaller 4/4 windows.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Incorporated as Nauset Plantation in 1646, and changed to Eastham in 1651, Eastham territory originally extended south to Pleasant Bay and north beyond Wellfleet Harbor. The early development pattern for what we now know as Eastham was impacted by its absence of deep-water harbor facilities. Relatively fertile soil led to dispersed agricultural settlement, but residential and commercial development was concentrated to the north at Wellfleet Harbor and to the south at Town Cove and Pleasant Bay. When the separate towns of Wellfleet and Orleans were created in the late-18th century, Eastham became and remained one of the least populated towns on the Cape throughout the 19th century.

In the 19th century, Eastham was the agricultural center of the Outer Cape. Crops evolved over time; corn and dairy were surpassed in the early-20th century by asparagus and turnips - two crops well suited for the sandy soil. In 1900, 58% of Eastham's workers were employed as farmers, but by 1930 that number had dwindled to 21%. Summer resort development, including cottage colonies and subdivisions of former farmland that would transform Eastham, had begun in earnest in the 1920s as middle-class access to car ownership increased and Cape roads were improved.

This cottage has an Assessor date of 1936, but that date is not accurate. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) began conducting periodic aerial photographic surveys of Cape Cod in 1938. Weir Road was laid out by that time, then known Sand Pit Lane because it led to a sand pit, but there was only one house at the eastern end of the road. The next USGS aerial survey was conducted in 1952, by which time this house was in place (Photo 2).

Title research traces back to a 1947 subdivision prepared for Philip M. Smith (1879-1955), a member of a family of local real estate developers (Figure 2). In 1948, he sold Lots 9 and 10 to Harold E. and Ruth M. Johnson of Worcester.¹ According to Eastham Tax Commitment Books, it was the Johnsons who built this house in 1951. The house is shown on the 1952 USGS aerial survey – one of the first in this location (Photo 3). Harold Eric Johnson (1911-2009) was listed as an assistant foreman for an abrasive manufacturer in the 1950 census, possibly referring to Norton Abrasives, the world's largest manufacturer of commercial abrasives for autobody, construction and marine industries. They only owned this property for a short time; in 1951, the Johnsons sold these two parcels to Virginia M. Arnold of Brighton, MA.² Born in Indiana in 1915, she was listed as a supervisor for an elementary school in the 1950 census. In 1969, Arnold sold the property to Paul J. and Frances B. Frank of Needham.³ Once again, the property was only owned for a short time; in 1972, the Franks sold it to Lee F. and Mary A. Bartlett of Worcester.⁴ The property remains in the Bartlett family.

¹ Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 703/ Page 139.

² Book 798/ Page 497.

³ Book 1456/ Page 63.

⁴ Book 1737/ Page 8.

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EASTHAM

20 WEIR ROAD

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BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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<https://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Sturgis/#panel=home>.

Dunham's 1929 Eastham (Mass.) Street Directory.

Larson Fisher, Massachusetts Historical Commission Area Form, Kingsbury Beach Road, 2005.

Massachusetts Historical Commission. "Reconnaissance Survey Report: Eastham." Typescript, Massachusetts Historical Commission, Boston, 1984.

Town of Eastham Tax Commitment Books. 1902-57.

United States Geological Survey. Aerial Survey 1938-2020,

<https://www.capecodcommission.org/our-work/cape-cod-chronology-viewer/>.

www.ancestry.com - Vital records.



Figure 1. Assessor Sketch.



Photo 2. View looking southwest.



Photo 3. Detail of 1952 USGS aerial survey (arrow to 20 Weir Road added).

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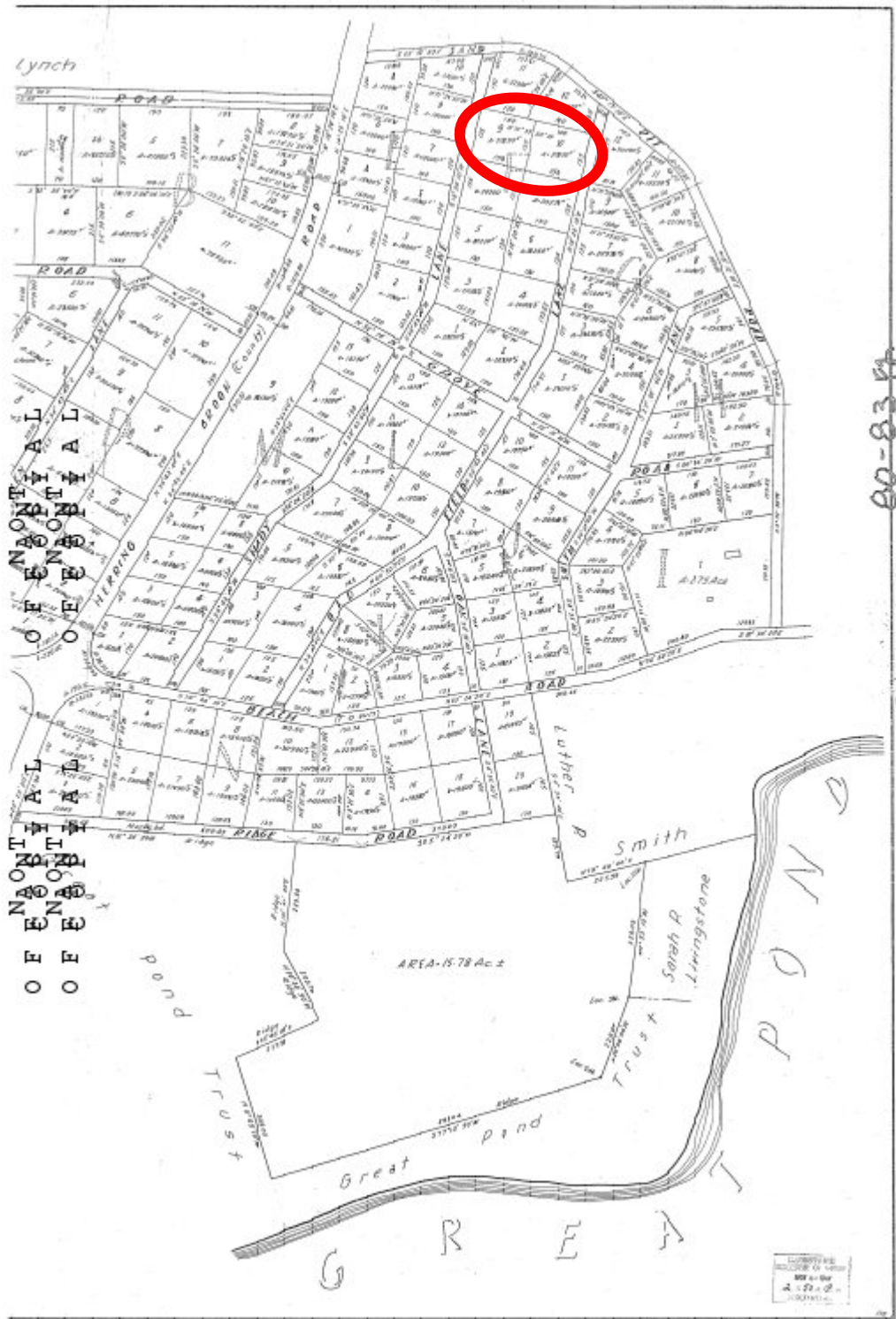


Figure 2. Subdivision of Land for Philip M. Smith, 1947 (circle of Lots 9 and 10 added).